

THE Baptist Record

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'Unconventional tactics'

Christian students fast, pray in Kenya

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP and local reports) — In an attempt to counter the fear, suspicion, and anxiety that followed the April 2 terrorist attack at Garissa University in eastern Kenya, Christian students at the University of Nairobi in Kenya's capital city organized a day of fasting and prayer on their campus.

"The only way to stop terrorism is by the Gospel transforming the would-be attackers," said a Christian worker who is not being identified for security reasons. "As in the case of Paul the Apostle these men, once transformed, could turn the world of terror upside down for the glory of God."

The Christian worker said Campus's Baptist Fellowship, a new church plant at the University of Nairobi, hosted a special day of prayer on April 9. Fellowship leaders said they believe a war on terror requires unconventional tactics — fasting, prayer, and evangelistic witness.



ATTACK AFTERMATH — Students attend to a wounded comrade following the April 2 terrorist attack at Garissa University in northeastern Kenya. The attack by the Islamic extremist group Al-Shabaab targeted Christian students and resulted in the slaughter of 147 people. (Video capture courtesy of CBS News)

The Al-Shabaab attack that targeted Christians at Garissa University left 147 people dead and dozens wounded. The university, located 90 miles from the Somali border, is in an area of Kenya that has seen frequent Al-Shabaab attacks.

The Somalia-based Islamist group has often targeted westerners, both tourists and expatriate residents, and the U.S.

Embassy has had travel warnings for that part of Kenya in effect for more than two years. Al-Shabaab has vowed to make the people of Kenya pay for their country's support of international anti-terror efforts.

The terrorist group claimed responsibility for the September 2013 attack on Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall in which 67 people, including four terror-

ists, were killed. The mall, parts of which were destroyed during the four-day battle, plans to reopen in May.

The Christian worker said some of the students he knows around Kenya "claim to be living in fear, because no one can protect them." One student told

see KENYA on p. 9

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MBTS one of fastest growing

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)

— Southern Baptist's Midwestern Seminary (MBTS) in Kansas City, Mo., ranks among the fastest growing seminaries in North America, according to a report published by the accrediting organization Association of Theological Schools (ATS).



ALLEN

The March 31 report, Why 100 Member Schools have Grown, noted that 37% of its 273 institutions have grown over the past five years, with 12 of the 100 schools experiencing growth of at least 50%.

Among the 12 schools on that list is Midwestern Seminary. "The closer one evaluates this ATS report, the better the news gets for Midwestern Seminary," said

see MBTS on p. 9

Pair agree S.C. shooting needs Christian response

CHARLESTON, S.C. (BP) — Christians should respond with godly grace and wisdom to the shooting death last week of unarmed African American Walter Scott at the hands of white police officer Michael Slager in North Charleston, S.C., an urban ministry leader and a criminal justice professor told Baptist Press in the days after the officer was charged with murder.

D.A. Horton, a preacher, rap artist, and North American Mission Board national coordinator for urban student missions, addressed the incident during the April 8 chapel service at Charleston Southern University in North Charleston, just miles from where the incident occurred.

Charleston Southern University is affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention.

"Radical righteousness is lived out when we work to see a criminal receive proper punishment, instead of private revenge; public order instead of personal retaliation; and respond with practical righteousness in place of our personal rights."

D.A. Horton

North American Mission Board
national coordinator for urban student missions

Radical righteousness as opposed to retaliation should prevail when such tragedies occur, he said.

"Radical righteousness is lived out when we work to see a criminal receive proper punishment, instead of private revenge; public order instead of personal retaliation; and respond with practical

righteousness in place of our personal rights," Horton said at the university, "so whatever you do, wherever you go, whatever cause you're going to champion, do so advocating the justice of God."

Slager, 33, was arrested April 7 and charged with murder after video from an observer's cell phone surfaced showing the of-

ficer fatally shooting 50-year-old Scott in the back as he fled the scene of a traffic stop. Slager said he had stopped Scott for having a tail light that wasn't working.

Christians can neither pretend law enforcers will always uphold the law nor rush to a judgment based on personal emotions and individual experiences, Horton said, but the church must seek the radical righteousness God prescribes in Matthew 5:38-42.

"So when I see situations like this go down, how dark and depraved things look, all I know is I don't have all the answers; I don't have all the insight. I was not present for Mike Brown [in Ferguson, Mo.], for Tamir Rice [in Cleveland, Ohio], for Eric Garner [in New York City], for Ezell Ford

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APR 24 2015



From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Churches as scofflaws

It's a topic that's been discussed before in this space, but it bears repeating. Check out the sheet music storage rooms in many Mississippi Baptist churches, and you'll find evidence of a crime.

It's not because our churches are continuing criminal enterprises. It's because many churches in Mississippi are lax in their observance of copyright laws — the most innocent explanation — or just don't care about following the laws in the first place. Either explanation can land a church in the same world of trouble.

It's simply not legal to copy music and other materials at will. "The U.S. Copyright Law is designed to encourage the development of the arts and sciences in our society — composers, authors, poets, dramatists, choreographers, and others," according to the Music Publishers Association of the United States (MPAUS).

"It is essential to the future of printed music that the Copyright Law be upheld by all. Composers, arrangers, publishers, and dealers are losing a significant percentage of their income because of illegal photocopying," MPAUS says. This loss of revenue ultimately means that less and less printed music will be available on sale, short print runs will mean higher prices for what is available, and dealers are no longer able to afford to carry large stocks of sheet music."

We've all heard of the cases of teenagers being sued in civil court and/or prosecuted in criminal court for downloading copyrighted digital music to their computers. Duplicating sheet music and other copyrighted materials is just as illegal.

"Copyright owners have every right to prosecute offenders under the U.S. Copyright Law," MPAUS points out. "To date, there have been a notable number of court decisions against individuals, churches, colleges, and other institutions for violation of the Copyright Law — some involving substantial fines."

Those substantial fines can run as high as \$250,000 per violation. The most flagrant and intentional abusers of copyright laws can spend as many as five years in prison, too.

The following are expressly prohibited under U.S. copyright laws (and this is not a comprehensive list):

■ Copying to avoid purchase of copyrighted materials, whether one copy or one thousand copies are made on church equipment.

■ Copying music for any kind of performance (with strict emergency exceptions).

■ Copying without including copyright notices, or intentionally obscuring/removing those notices.

■ Copying to create anthologies, compilations, or historical collections — no matter how noble or innocent the original intent.

■ Reproducing materials designed to be consumable such as workbooks, standardized tests, and answer sheets.

■ Charging users beyond the actual cost involved in making legally-permitted copies. In other words, making an undeserved profit after a copyright owner has given the green light for reproduction.

Copyright entitlements also cover CDs, DVDs, and digital downloads over the Internet. While copyright enforcement has struggled to keep up as new copying devices are introduced at a dizzying rate, the laws still apply.

Modern copyright law is a complicated field that encompasses both hundred-year-old technologies as well as the latest trends as they are introduced, so churches would be well advised to engage in at least an annual review of the laws involved.

A music minister recently began an interim term in a Mississippi Baptist church. He was astonished to discover that virtually every copy of sheet music at the church was in violation of copyright laws. He came to understand that had apparently been the situation for decades. No one at the church had given a second thought to running copies for the whole choir.

He promptly informed the church's leadership of the dangers involved, and those leaders wisely allowed him to quickly correct the problem.

Would that small church, in out-of-the-way Mississippi, have ever gotten caught for those longstanding violations? The answer doesn't really matter.

What matters is that we do the right thing. What matters is that the lost people literally surrounding every one of our Mississippi Baptist churches know that we are honest people — followers of the One who commanded us to be light in a dark world.

How can we be that light when we are stealing from others? Think about it.

Clearing out the noise



Guest opinion
with John White

George Gilder recently wrote a book titled, *Knowledge and Power*. In the book, Gilder talks at length about information theory. If you think for a moment about a wire, to transmit new information it must be a low entropy carrier. What this means is, if wires carrying information contain too much "noise," the receiver will not be able to discern between noise and information.

Gilder argues that in society, we must have a low entropy (predictable) environment in order for society to flourish. This would include predictable laws, tax rates, immigration policy, and the assurance that standard institutions like traditional marriage will be upheld.

When the environment is not predictable, however, there is too much noise and no transfer of new information. As a result, there is a decrease in prosperity.

Let us juxtapose that with the Christian life. Our job is to evangelize, make disciples, and destroy all arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. I would argue that the Gospel is "new" information to those in our world today. We (the carriers) must be low entropy (predictable) if we are going to be able to transmit the Gospel (new information) to them.

What does this mean? It means that our lives must be predictably consistent. The problem comes when we preach a message that says "repent," but the next day, in dislocative fashion, many in Christian circles succumb to immorality, financial corruption, infidelity, or any number of sins. As a result, what we preach isn't discernable over the chaos of our lives. Our noisy lives distort the picture of grace we are sharing.

We must be predictable. We must reflect God who is, by His very nature, changeless. Thomas Chisolm's wonderful hymn says, "Thou changest not..." Oh, how many times I have just crooned those words rather than applying them to my life!

Here is the rub: Christians, the world hates you. They want you and your message squelched. They want the Church to fail — to fall flat on its face. They cheer as ministers and those ensconced in lofty Christian circles succumb to temptation. They cheer our demise.

Interestingly, we in the Church are so like-minded on a variety of issues, from the depravity of man, the need of a Savior, to the Resurrection of Christ, and even a plethora of social positions like the sanctity of life and traditional marriage. Our team could be the

world's largest volunteer force. After all, we already have the leadership, logistics, financial resources, infrastructure, and infallible strategy written by the hands of those who knew Christ personally.

We should be taking Truth to the culture, but we aren't. Instead of taking Truth to those who hate us — instead of loving and serving them and doing exactly what Christ has commanded of us — we often turn our energies on our allies. We treat each other in the church with disdain. We question motives and question hearts whenever someone does something that goes against our personal preferences.

In short, we rip each other's eyes out over the color of the carpet, the length of a sermon, or whether or not the music meets our standard of "appropriate." Many times, we are more concerned about combating those in the church who threaten our delicate sensibilities than we are uniting with those who share a common belief — and taking Truth to the masses. Our noise distorts the message.

Many think the process of discipleship is to please people and persuade God to please us. In truth, we are called to please God and persuade people as to Him. Why do we continue to get this wrong? Do we really believe Christianity is about pleasing ourselves? We run the risk of the Gospel looking like something it was never meant to be. Hollywood does a good job making fake things look real and in many ways, the Church does a good job of making what's real look fake.

What is the remedy? Where should we focus? How about this for starters (and I point at myself first)? Rather than focusing on music styles and carpet color, or timing a sermon or solo with a stopwatch, let us make this our mantra: In Christ, with Christ, through Christ, for Christ, to Christ, on Christ.

After all, so much good theology comes from very simple grammar.

White is pastor of worship and music at First Church, Pascagoula.

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THE END — A painting by Tom Lovell, hanging at the Appomattox Court House National Historic Park in Virginia, depicts confederate General Robert E. Lee (seated at left) signing the surrender documents that ended the Civil War on April 9, 1865, while Union commander U.S. Grant (seated at right) looks on. (Photo credit: Alaskan Dude [CC BY 2.0: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>]), via Wikimedia Commons)

Christian outlook evident at Appomattox surrender

By Stephen Douglas Wilson
Baptist Press Correspondent

Gen. Robert E. Lee arrived at the McLean House near Appomattox, Va., one hundred and fifty years ago last week, to meet with Union commander Gen. Ulysses S. Grant (born Hiram Ulysses Grant).

Nearly surrounded and with an undernourished army, Lee sought generous surrender terms during that April 9, 1865 meeting from the Union army leader whose wartime nickname was "Unconditional Surrender Grant." Both men knew that what they decided here would set the tone for the nation after the grueling four-year Civil War.

Religious backgrounds

The two men grew up in a United States that embraced a strong Christian worldview. Lee was a practicing Christian for most of his life and was confirmed in his Episcopal faith. He carried around a worn-out prayer book during the Civil War that was only replaced when he could no longer read the small print.

Lee had freed his own slaves long before the war, retaining one of his freed slaves as his paid servant and confidant. Lee's personal compassion for others as both a private citizen and an army commander was legendary. In addition, he later confessed to other Southern-

ers after the war that he had prayed for his enemies during the conflict.

The faith of Grant is harder to discern. At the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., a youthful Grant revealed to others that he disliked attending chapel services. He was not a regular churchgoer, but did so occasionally at the request of his devout wife.

Grant never publicly made his faith convictions known, although the Methodist pastor of his wife said that Grant had confessed Christ before his death.

Grant resigned his military commission prior to the Civil War in part because of too much drinking on his part. After returning to the Army, his wartime record never included incidents of alcohol impacting his military performance although the pre-war charge of insobriety resurfaced among his critics.

Nevertheless, his memoirs reveal his Christian worldview and a desire to live a moral life. After the war when Grant was president, he signed the bill that made Christmas an official federal holiday.

Terms of surrender

Lee, dressed in his best uniform, arrived at the McLean residence first and waited for Grant to arrive. In a previous correspondence, Grant magnanimously told Lee to pick the

The spirit of Christ certainly had prevailed on that April day at Appomattox. It was on a Palm Sunday. As noted by an American historian, the men of both armies would all live to see Easter.

meeting place and that he would meet him there. Grant entered the house in a mud-spattered field uniform that revealed his haste to get there. The two men exchanged pleasantries and discussed their common military service in the Mexican War.

Surprisingly, Grant could not bear to bring up the subject of surrender. He later related he was genuinely saddened by the plight of his Confederate enemies. It was Lee who gently nudged the Union general into that discussion.

In what must be described as one of the most Christ-like moments in American history, Grant then proceeded to propose a very gentle settlement for his enemies of the last four years.

Grant offered to parole Lee's enlisted men, only on their word not to take up arms against the United States ever again. Officers would have to sign a written parole vouching for their men. Enlisted men would have to give up their

arms but officers could keep their sidearms, horses, and private property.

The Union commander said each man could return home without fear of being imprisoned or prosecuted for treason.

In a brief discussion, Lee convinced Grant to let enlisted men keep the horses and mules they possessed to assist them in planting crops for that spring. Arrangements also were made for the hungry Confederates to be fed from Union storehouses.

Lee, who realized that Grant's terms were better than he had expected, conveyed his gratitude by saying to Grant, "This will have a very happy effect among the men and do much toward reconciling the country." Both men then shook hands and left.

Lee rode back to Confederate lines. When Grant emerged from the McLean residence, Union troops began cheering but the general rebuked them.

"The Confederates are now our countrymen, and we do not want to exult over their downfall," he said.

Three days later, Lee's entire army formally surrendered without incident. Each army showed the proper respect to each other. There is no record of a single Union soldier cheering for their victory or jeering their Confederate counterparts.

Within two-and-a-half months, all other Confederate

armies would surrender in like fashion. The Civil War was over.

Mutual respect

For the rest of their lives, both Lee and Grant possessed a great respect for each other. Grant never spoke ill of Lee and later prevented federal authorities from charging Lee with treason, as that would have violated the letter and spirit of the Appomattox peace.

Lee long remembered Grant's generosity at Appomattox. Years later when a faculty member at Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) in Lexington, Va., where Lee was the president, spoke ill of Grant within hearing distance, Lee interjected, "Sir, if you dare presume to speak anything disrespectful of General Grant in my presence again, either you or I will sever your connection with this university."

The spirit of Christ certainly had prevailed on that April day at Appomattox. It was on a Palm Sunday. As noted by an American historian, the men of both armies would all live to see Easter.

Stephen Douglas Wilson is an adjunct professor at West Kentucky Community and Technical College in Paducah, and a former member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. Edited for style and clarity.

I have heard long sermons and short sermons, loud sermons and soft sermons, but I have never heard a bad sermon. And whenever I say that, people say, "Well, I've heard plenty of 'em." Well, maybe you have, but I haven't. I've heard people preach their very first sermon and was blessed. I have heard people do their first funeral sermon or wedding and was blessed. In fact, not only have I never heard a bad sermon, I cannot remember hearing a bad devotional and I've heard plenty of them also. What got me thinking in this direction is a devotional that I heard recently in a large gathering of several hundred people and the person giving the devotional who was not used to being before a group of people like that or in the setting like we were in.

When the devotional began, the only thing I understood was the opening sound, "Ah," and every once in a while I could distinguish a different sound that was kind of "Um." But as far as words and phrases, I was unable to distinguish any of them. Now it wasn't the speaker altogether, for the sound system was not good. The acoustics were terrible and there were people around the room who were oblivious to the devotional and were whispering, talking and ignoring, so I tried more intently to listen. As hard as I tried, the only thing that I could pick up were additional "Ah's" and "Um's."

I was encouraged as I looked around about me and saw that there were people who could not understand either what was being said, but I kept on

Ah – Um

trying. I kept on trying to understand because the person giving the devotional was so focused and intense on trying to communicate with all of us, but I couldn't grasp it. I had not one clue as to what they were talking about, so how could I be blessed by a devotional that I never understood?

I was first of all blessed by the courage of the person giving the devotional. They say that one of the greatest fears that people struggle with is the fear of public speaking. Having done that throughout my adult life, I understand why those fears can be traumatic. I especially remember back in the days when we had parts in Training Union and every few weeks I was assigned to give one of the parts then

would have half a dozen strokes before Sunday night ever arrived. I remember some of my first opportunities to preach and even though I had tried to prepare, I could hardly breathe. When the time came to get up and deliver, I imagined that some of my early sermons were dominated by such expressions as, "Ah," and "Um." When asked to share something in a meeting or a church service, I've had far more people to tell me no than to say yes and I understand why. It can be a daunting experience, a breath-taking, brain freezing experience to get up before a group of people and simply the demonstration of courage to step up there lifted my spirits.

The second thing that blessed my heart was the countenance

of the devotion giver. While the devotional might as well have been in Russian, it seemed like to me that there was a warm, sweet countenance about the person who was doing it. I've thought about that verse describing the early disciples when it says, "They took note that these men had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Seems like to me that this person had been with Him also.

But finally, after what seemed like several dozen "Ah's" and "Um's," the devotion concluded with a verse of Scripture which clearly had impacted the speaker's life and was familiar to me and in fact, made the entire devotional meaningful to me because of the communication.

Let me encourage you as you listen to sermons and devotionals to give it your best shot and try to listen even though you may not understand. The sound may not be sufficient, the thought process may not be coherent to you, but stay connected and listen for a word that maybe, just maybe, if your heart is open, God will drop His word into your soul and you will be blessed, encouraged, challenged and thankful.

One more thing – pray for that person who is speaking before you get there, while they are speaking, and after it is over. Mm-hmm – God may be able to work in you.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Bible Drill



FIRST CHURCH, TUPELO, recognizes its Bible drillers. Student drillers are (left photo, from left) Benjamin Russell, Colleen Leckie, Scarlett Leckie, and Mary Esther Leckie; and children's drillers (center photo, front row) Keili Ikemori, Will Gammill, Peyton Lindsey, and John Braxton Daughdrill; (center photo, back row) Seth Gammill, Luke Angle, Mary Scruggs, and Jake Milstead; and (right photo) Maggie McCord.



NEW HOME CHURCH, SMITH COUNTY, recognizes Bible drillers Hunter McCrory and Tori Tucker.



CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, recognizes its children's drillers.



HEBRON CHURCH, YAZOO ASSOCIATION, recognizes its Bible drillers, shown with pastor Scott Sones.

Glorieta lawsuit dismissed by U.S. District Court judge

NASHVILLE (BP) — The U.S. District Court for New Mexico has dismissed all claims in a lawsuit against LifeWay Christian Resources, the Southern Baptist Convention and its executive committee, and the Glorieta 2.0 ministry that bought Glorieta Conference Center from LifeWay 18 months ago.

New Mexico federal judge James O. Browning issued the rulings in a suit filed by an Arkansas couple, Kirk and Susie Tompkins, who had been leaseholders at the conference center. Within hours of the ruling, the Tompkins filed notice of appeal to the U.S. District Court of Appeal for the Tenth Circuit in Denver.

Browning's ruling came in five separate orders totaling 71 pages, including an order last September that dismissed several named defendants.

One of Browning's March 31 rulings states: "The Court cannot find any factual allegations from which it can infer that the individual defendants are liable for the misconduct alleged. Indeed, the Tompkins fail to identify an act by any of the defendants to allow for such an inference. They do not state a plausible claim."

The ruling concludes: "... the Court finds the Tompkins have failed to assert claims upon which relief can be granted for lack of factual allegations... (and) for want of standing."

The case, dismissed with prejudice in legal terminology, cannot be re-filed.

LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer said in Nashville, "This is incredible news. I thank God for His goodness."

"This process has been extend-

ed, painful, and costly. I am so thankful to get this ordeal behind us, leaving no doubt of our integrity throughout this process, and after so many months of baseless attacks on our ministry partners, trustees, and executive leadership," Rainer said.

The Tompkins, of Little Rock, Ar., filed the lawsuit in September 2013 claiming the 2,400-acre property near Santa Fe was not properly transferred and that LifeWay, Glorieta 2.0, and executive committee leadership improperly handled the sale.

Last September, federal magistrate Robert Hayes Scott recommended dismissal of all claims in a 79-page document prepared for the federal court in Albuquerque where the lawsuit was filed. Scott wrote that he found no evidence of misconduct in the Glorieta sale.

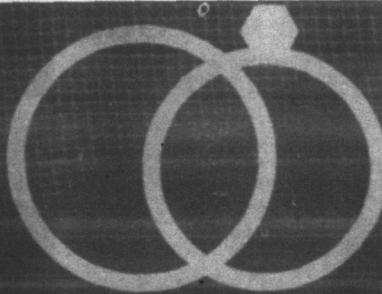
Scott, in his role as a magistrate for the federal court, disagreed with the Tompkins' contentions in his recommendations to dismiss their lawsuit. "The transfer of Glorieta by LifeWay was not fraudulent," Scott wrote. "...[A]llegations of fraud and misconduct are baseless and have no foundation in the evidence."

Browning declined in his orders, however, to award LifeWay attorney fees for its defense against the Tompkins' suit.

At the time of the Glorieta sale to the nonprofit Glorieta 2.0 group, 65 churches, institutions, and individuals owned structures on year-to-year leased lots at Glorieta. Rainer reported to the 2014 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting that Glorieta 2.0 offered to extend the year-to-year leases or purchase structures built there for up to \$100,000, which all but a handful of leaseholders accepted.



BROWNING



#PRAYforMARRIAGE

APRIL 28th 2015

ERLC: Pray for Supreme Court, same sex marriage decision

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville is inviting Christians to pray regarding what might be a landmark decision on marriage by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Regardless of how the justices rule, their decision will be applied nationwide. That means a ruling favorable to same sex marriage will legalize such unions in Mississippi. A ruling adverse to same sex marriage means the separate states will continue to be able to define marriage as they deem appropriate.

The ERLC launched its Pray for Marriage initiative on April 7, three weeks before the high court's April 28 oral arguments involving same sex marriage. The justices are expected to issue an opinion by late June or early July.

In asking Southern Baptists and others to pray, ERLC pointed in a posting on its website to the importance of the high court's decision: "Before the Court is an up or down vote to redefine marriage... The outcome of this decision will shape the landscape

of the church's ministry in the United States for generations to come, and it will have significant consequences on the future of religious liberty."

The ERLC has signed on to friend of the court briefs urging the justices to uphold the authority of states to limit marriage to a man and a woman. In its invitation to pray, the ERLC provided a sample prayer guide based on various biblical passages:

■ "Pray that all people, including governing authorities, would honor the institution of marriage."

■ "Pray for the Supreme Court justices, that they would be receptive to the arguments being made passionately before them."

■ "Pray for lead attorneys who will be arguing on behalf of the states seeking to uphold marriage. Ask God to give them clarity and wisdom, for their arguments to be persuasive, and for God to give them favor before the justices."

■ "Pray for those who disagree with us, that God would help them understand and respect the opinions of those whose definition of marriage is

grounded in the biblical witness.

■ "[P]ray and hope for the best but plan for [an adverse ruling]. Even in the event of a bad decision, marriage will always be what marriage truly is."

The ERLC on its web site urged prayer by churches and organizations specifically on April 28 at 9 a.m. CT, when the oral arguments begin. The entity also encouraged the use of a new avatar provided on its website for social media accounts and the inclusion of the hashtag, #PrayForMarriage, with posts. The ERLC post and avatar are available at Pray for Marriage.

The Supreme Court's oral arguments will come in a case from the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati, which became in November the first federal appellate court to rule that states have the authority to define marriage as only a heterosexual union.

The opinion by the Sixth Circuit took place in challenges to laws in the states of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. Five other appeals courts have invalidated state laws that prohibited same sex marriage.

Ohio pastor to be nominated for SBC second vice president

COLUMBUS, Ohio (BP) — Ohio pastor Chad Keck will be nominated for second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in June, a fellow Ohio pastor announced April 7.

Keck has been senior pastor of the Dayton-area First Church of Kettering since December 2010, having earlier served churches in Florida, Texas, and Tennessee dur-

ing 14 years in the ministry. He also is a former collegiate ministry event coordinator for LifeWay Christian Resources.

David Starry, senior pastor of First Church in Vandalia, Ohio, made the announcement.

Keck holds a doctorate in educational ministry from Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.; a master of biblical studies/theol-

ogy from Trevecca Nazarene University in Nashville; and an undergraduate degree from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, where he sensed a call to ministry as a college senior.

He is the author of two books: *Ordinarily Faithful, Life Lessons from the Judges: Gideon*, and *Vital Skills: How to be a Campus Missionary*.

Keck and his wife Candace, married for 14 years, have two children and are in the process of adopting two more children from China, Starry reported.



KECK

Kansas City, Mo.; a master of biblical studies/theol-



Just for the Record



Preschoolers from **CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG**, are shown making their annual Easter scenes.



Over 30 children participated in the annual Easter egg hunt at **CALVARY CHURCH, SUMMIT**, Mar. 29. Bobbie Dunaway and Kody Tullos were in charge of the event. Mike Burns, pastor.



The children and youth of **MT. OLIVET CHURCH, SCOTT ASSOCIATION**, performed the Easter musical, Beyond the Bunny, the True Amazing Story of Easter Mar. 29. Shown are some of the participants. Chris Wells, pastor.



LIBERTY and **NEW BETHEL CHURCHES, CARROLL COUNTY**, combined for a 5th Sunday singing in March. Shown are Benny Rigby, left and "Toad" Donahoo.



STEELE CHURCH, SCOTT ASSOCIATION, recently honored pastor's wife Denise Smith for pastor's wife appreciation. Shown are Carolyn Cooper, Smith, and Dianne Sharp.



A mission team from **PLEASANT RIDGE CHURCH, WOODLAND**, went to Noblesville, Ind. (suburb of Indianapolis), to serve alongside Matt Brewer and Gary Permenter at Restoration Church Mar. 30 – Apr. 3.



Music minister, John Herring, **FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA**, is shown leading the choir as part of the church's Easter cantata Mar. 29.



BETHEL CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, held an Easter egg hunt Mar. 28.

Staff Changes



TRINITY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, called Charlie Harris, Jr., as pastor Mar. 29. He is shown with his wife Lesley and sons Gideon and Judah.



FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA, has named long-time member and children's ministry volunteer, Charla Boatman, to serve as the new children's director.

In other Staff Changes:

► **First Church, Biloxi**, has called Smokey Gibson as pastor. Gibson previously served the church as minister of students from 2004 – 2008, and was minister of students at Hunter Street Church, Hoover, Ala., 2008 – 2015. He holds a Master of Arts in Christian Education from New Orleans Seminary and a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Education from Leavell College in New Orleans. He and his wife Jennifer have been married 15 years and have two daughters, Emma and Isabella. He began his ministry at the church Apr. 5.

BURROUGHS BUS SALES



BiBLiOciPHER

TMU FNLHMQ NL AJWWJU WSEG

UKANJL; EGH EZZ WSJ WSNGRL WSEW

QEV AJ HJLNUJH EUJ GMW WM AJ

DMQOEUJH WM NW.

OUMPJUAL JNRSW: JZJPJG

Clue: A = B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: 3 John 11.

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Just for the Record



The children of **HEBRON CHURCH, YAZOO ASSOCIATION**, are shown during their Easter program, directed by Kay Martin.



TANGIPAHOA CHURCH, SUMMIT, held a RA Boy's Race Off. Shown are Bailey Boyd, Brayden Boyd, Spark Plug award; Tanner Bond, first place, Crusader Division, overall fastest car; Aiden Wilson, Church first place with the fastest car.



The Children in Action of **PROVIDENCE CHURCH, CARROLLTON**, delivered meals to senior citizens. Shown are Ann Hart Smith, Lily Avant, Alyssa Star Purvis, and Tommy Wiltshire.



CARROLLTON CHURCH, CARROLLTON, experienced God Speaks on Easter weekend. Shown is Snooky Lee reading during one of the 15-minute segments of continuous Bible reading publicly for 46 hours.



WEIR CHURCH, WEIR, hosted an Easter egg hunt Apr. 4. Shown are the ladies from the church's children's ministry, pastor Jared Busby, and children.

In other Church News:

► **First Church, Potts Camp**, is hosting a women's conference Apr. 18, beginning at 8:30 a.m. Tillie Gullett, speaker; Rhonda Goodwin, music; for information, call (662) 333-7602.

College News



(At left) Grady Crowell (second from right), missions director for Clarke Association in Quitman, and his family recently celebrated for the second time a third-generation graduation of a family member from **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE** in Clinton. Allison Aker McCaffrey (third from left) graduated in December 2014, while Joshua McCaffrey (fourth from left) graduated in May 2013. They join parents Timothy (left) and Naomi Crowell McCaffrey (second from left), second generation MC graduates, and grandparents Grady and Martha Ann Hall Crowell (right), first generation MC graduates, at Allison's graduation.



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY presented 15 alumni of the Class of 1965 with 50-year medallions during the annual 50-year luncheon held during Homecoming activities on Friday, March 20. Honorees pictured at the luncheon are (front row, left to right) Carey President Dr. Tommy King; Sandra King of Columbia; Brenda Joyce Edmonson of Alvarado, Texas; Joanne Keith of Mobile, Ala.; Kay Stewart of Bay Minette, Ala.; (second row, left to right) Bernice Archie of Petal; Dale Rainey of Columbus; Mary Morton of Mobile, Ala.; Rachel West of Kosciusko; Dan West of Kosciusko; (third row, left to right) Carol Pierce Hoffmeister of Lakewood, Colo.; Gene Winters of Petal; Ron Herrod of Sevierville, Tenn.; Margaret Rives of Clinton; Ronald Ballard of Brookhaven; and George Myers of Daphne, Ala.



Mary McRae was elected Student Government Association president at **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE**. An MC junior, McRae is a 21-year-old Tishomingo County resident majoring in mathematics.

(At left) The **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** Homecoming Court for 2014-2015 includes (left to right) Claresta Tasman of Paramaribo, Suriname, freshman maid; McKayla Streck of Seminary, sophomore maid; Conner Sears of Columbia, junior maid; Willa-Ann Renard of Cushing, Okla., senior maid; Tiffany Hooper of State Line, Homecoming Queen; Emily Goff of Vancleave, senior maid; Kristel Rodriguez of Laurel, junior maid; Leah Smith of Raymond, sophomore maid; and Lindsay Knight of Hattiesburg, freshman maid. Ben Austin, Zachary, La., and Hannah Cook-Kelly, Jayess, were crowned Mr. and Mrs. William Carey University during homecoming activities Mar. 27-28. Shown is the homecoming court.



Ben Salters of Ocean Springs (center), a senior music performance major at **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY**, was awarded the Governors' Award at the Mississippi chapter meeting of the National Association of Teachers of Singing from March 20-21. Salters also won the top prize in his division, senior men. Salters is pictured with Connie Roberts (left), professor of music, and Brian Murphy, adjunct instructor of piano.

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In other College News:

► For the seventh consecutive year, **William Carey University** has received a perfect score of 3.0 on the Financial Responsibility Index released by the U.S. Department of Education. For-profit and non-profit institutions of higher learning are required to annually submit audited financial statements to the Department of Education to demonstrate they are maintaining the standards of financial responsibility necessary to participate in Title IV, or federal student aid. Data from the statements are used to gauge

the financial responsibility of the institution and to calculate the Financial Responsibility Composite Score, which may range from negative 1.0 to positive 3.0.

► **William Carey University** has again been named a Champions of Character Five-Star Institution by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. The Five-Star Institution designation recognizes institutions demonstrating a commitment to the Champions of Character program, which works to instill five core values of integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership in student-athletes.

CLASSIFIEDS

FOREST AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A GOD CALLED, SPIRIT FILLED PASTOR TO LEAD A GROWING CONGREGATION. Salary based on experience and education. Degree preferred. Send resume to fabc7637@att.net or mail to Forest Avenue Baptist Church P.O. Box 611 Jackson, AL 38645.

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NEW SEARCH, NEW COMMITTEE, FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH AT RINGGOLD, LOUISIANA IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 566, Ringgold, La 71068. Resumes received between now and May 15, 2015 will be considered. Please pray for our Church and our Committee.

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MS POSITIONS

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, DURANT IS SEEKING A PART-TIME ADMINISTRATIVE CHURCH SECRETARY. Please send resume to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, Durant, 132 West Mulberry Street, Durant, MS 39063

EASTWOOD BAPTIST CHURCH IN INDIANOLA, MS IS IN SEARCH OF A FULL TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, P. O. Box 466, Indianola, MS 38751 or email to Shirley Belts at shirleybelts@bellsouth.net

STRONG RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH IN PINOLA, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Gene Farmer at 209 Katie Bush Rd Pinola, MS 39149

TOPEKA BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH. Send resumes to: 807 China Grove Road, Jayess, MS 38641 or brodgate54@bellsouth.net

VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH IN MATHIS-TON, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR EITHER A BI-VOCATIONAL OR A FULL-TIME PASTOR. Please send resumes to: Victory Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 12, Mathiston, Ms.

MERIDIAN CHURCH SEEKS PIANIST. With both sight reading and accompaniment skills and will be responsible for playing with other musicians for weekly worship services and adult choir rehearsals. Salary will be based on experience. Email resume to ginnyutu@att.net

SOUTH MCCOMB BAPTIST IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER TO LEAD AND SERVE. Email all resumes to smbo01@bellsouth.net

SMALL BAPTIST CHURCH IN NORTH RANKIN COUNTY IN NEED OF A BI-VOCATIONAL PIANO PLAYER, AND, ALSO, A BI-VOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR. Please send resumes to the Lake Harbor Baptist Church P.O. Box 339 Sandhill, Ms 39161.

NEEDED: FULL TIME OR BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH AND CHILDREN AT ASHLAND BAPTIST CHURCH IN ASHLAND, MS. Send resumes to Mr. Stanley Poff, 285 Carter Flats, Ashland, MS 38603 or email to stanleypoff@yahoo.com

PART/TIME YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED AT NEW SIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS. Please send resumes to: Youth Minister Search Comm. 629 Forest Trail Brookhaven, Ms 39061

ROSELAND PARK BAPTIST CHURCH IN PICAYUNE, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Please send resumes to: RBC, Attn: Music Search Committee, 2130 Highway 11 North, Picayune, MS 39466 or email to jennifer@rbc.us

EAST BOONEVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR. Please mail resumes to: East Booneville Baptist Church, Attn: Search Committee, 602 East Church St, Booneville, MS 38829, or email to rickey@eastbooneville.com

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF GLENDALE IN HATTIESBURG, MS IS ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR THE POSITION OF PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER. Please email resumes to: fbg2311@comcast.net or mail to 2311 Glendale Avenue, Hattiesburg MS 39401. We are looking for someone for 15-20 hours per week.

SHOOTING

cont. from p. 1

[in Los Angeles] and for the multitude of names that have been going down. I wasn't there when the officers got gunned down in Brooklyn... but what I do know as a believer, there was a real world with real hurt. There [are] real issues going on out there and if believers cannot look to the words of Christ, and be words of comfort and clarity to our culture, then we don't need to be claiming to be the church."

Joshua Styles, who teaches criminal justice and Christian studies at North Greenville University — another Baptist-affiliated university in South Carolina — told Baptist Press the incident reflects a fallen world.

"This is where the Gospel and the Christian message really speaks to this. We would hope that in a just world... even if we now there's going to be wrongdoers, we would hope that the state and that those who represent the state would be perfectly just in their execution of justice but frankly speaking... because of sin, even those in authority are going to abuse their power."

Styles, who holds a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and attended police academy in Raleigh, N.C.,

said while the officer and victim are of two different ethnicities, the public should not assume race was the motive.

"I'm a white American so I have not experienced what [African Americans] have in the past, and what they actually still do experience to this day. African Americans perceive law enforcement differently.

"We do, I think as believers, need to be very empathetic in caring toward a minority community who would struggle with an issue like this. We need to respond with grace... but we don't want to overblow things like the media would just for the sake of sensationalizing."

Horton, in his chapel message, said God's law embraces the rights of the criminal as well as the victim, and seeks a punishment appropriate to the crime. If people filter the world through their sinful nature, he said, justice becomes subjective and is no longer objective.

"When we allow our opinion to be the gospel in our life, that's when we know we're wrong in the eyes of God. We have to allow the Gospel to be the Gospel truth in our eyes, so that we can in humility subject our opinion to it, and say, 'Lord help me navigate through the tension that I'm in as a representative of Christ Jesus.'"

KENYA

cont. from p. 1

the worker, "Anyone can just walk in off the street," voicing a fear of many students that there are limitations in the security measures at universities around the country.

The worker said the fear is compounded by many students' belief that terrorists might have inside help from members of student bodies. One particular group, Kenyan Somalis, is being held in suspicion by other students because of their ethnic and

Pray

Christians in the United States can join the students in praying for fellow students and others to accept the true peace that can only be found in Christ, and for terror to be turned upside down by the Gospel.

religious ties to members of Al-Shabaab, the worker said.

On April 3 after the Garissa attack, a mob of students formed on the University

of Nairobi campus to voice what some might consider to be hate speech against Somali students. No violence occurred, but the worker said the environment is dangerous for students of Somali descent.

He said Campus Baptist Fellowship plans to double its efforts in reaching out to Somali students on the campus.

During the day of prayer, small prayer groups fasted and met in dormitory rooms and off-campus housing, and a larger group gathered later in the day to pray.

the robust growth we've experienced the past couple years.

"Thankfully, early indicators point toward robust growth for 2015/16 as well."

Eliza Smith Brown, director of Communications and External Relations at ATS, said, "Of the 34 schools that have grown more than 25% during the past five years, MBTS is the only one that built upon a 2009 enrollment of more than 500 students. To have achieved 51% growth from that starting point required incremental growth of more than 270 students — an extraordinary feat."

Allen said, "Under God's kind providence, our growth has been a team effort, with our Enrollment Management Office leading the way, and with everyone else here leaning into the effort with them. We've been able to build an institutional culture where every employee — faculty, administration, and staff — has bought into our vision of existing for the Church and are giving their very best efforts to this end."

"For all of this, I am so very grateful to God."

OBITUARY

Edsor C. Wells Sr., 90, of Lauderdale passed away at his home on March 1. He was born in Shubuta on August 26, 1924, the son of the late Ulysses and Annie Bell (Chancellor) Wells. At the age of 18, he was drafted into the Army Air Force and trained as an aerial engineer gunner. He flew missions over France and Germany on B-26 medium bomber and was discharged in February 1946 as S/Sgt at Camp Shelby. Wells married Gilda Hutcherson on June 29, 1947. He attended Clarke College in Newton and Mississippi College in Clinton, where he received a bachelor of arts degree in 1951. He earned a Master of Religious Education degree from the New Orleans Seminary.



WELLS

Wells was ordained to the Gospel ministry on January 28, 1951, and served as pastor of seven Southern Baptist churches in the state of Mississippi. After retirement, he served nine Mississippi churches as interim pastor. He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Gilda Wells; brother, Chester (Mary Anne) Wells; two children, Dianne (Dale) Kimsey and Eddie (Linda) Wells; four grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to First Baptist Church of Lauderdale for the Family Life Center, 3659 Lauderdale Rd. Lauderdale, Ms. 39335. Family and friends may sign the online guestbook at robertbarhamffh.com.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director
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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JANUARY 2015

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Mr. & Mrs. Tom Coward
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FEBRUARY 2015

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Ms. Faye G. Smith
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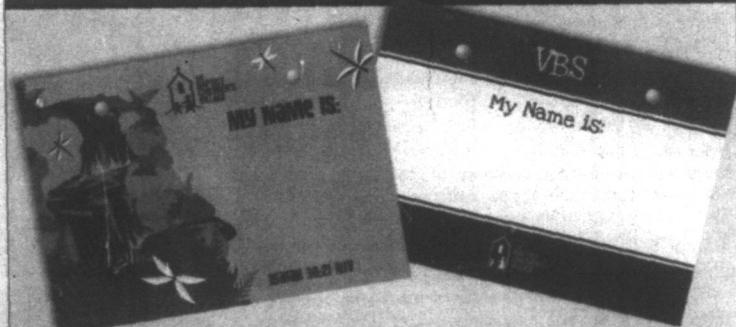
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Mrs. Patricia A. Henderson
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Mrs. Glenda C. Fry
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Mrs. Linda W. Gibson
Mrs. Mary Lucy Fowler
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Mrs. Rita Tanksley
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Thank you to the volunteers from PONTOTOC COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION who worked Easter weekend to put a new roof on Tarver house at the Farrow Manor Campus.

VBS IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER!



The Baptist Children's Village is offering FREE name tags for Vacation Bible School.

There or two designs. One compliments the Lifeway theme and the other is a generic design to use with any curriculum. You may conveniently place your order on our web site. There you will also find ways to schedule a speaker from The Baptist Children's Village to come share during VBS or sponsor a VBS mission project.

Please visit www.baptistchildrensvillage.com or contact Celeste Cade, BCV Public Relations Manager, to place your order or to find out more information.

A Refined People • Zechariah 13:1-9

Zechariah writes of an extremely difficult time, the Babylonian captivity, the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and the exile of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Coming out of that difficult time Zechariah describes the refining process of the captivity and the refining of God's people.

Refinement is not easy. We sometimes call it our sanctification process. God is making us to be what He wants us to be transforming us from what we were. The process is trying, but the result is worth the pain. God has the plan that works.

The Fountain That Cleanses (Zechariah 13:1-6)

"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." (Zechariah 13:1 NKJV)

Zechariah brings back to remembrance the fountain described in Jeremiah 2:13 "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns-broken cisterns that can hold no water" (NKJV) Zechariah pointed to a day when a new fountain would be built, one to cleanse those returning from their sin and impurity.

In this thorough cleansing process God will remove all false idols and every

unclean spirit from the land. If any false prophet continues, they shall be put to death, if necessary by their own parents. God's intention will be to remove all false religion and false prophets from His land.

We know this also points to the day when God shall bring judgment upon all peoples holding those accountable for sin who deny Christ and accountable for service to those who profess Christ.

The Strike That Frees (Zechariah 13:7)

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, a gainst the Man who is My Companion, says the Lord of hosts. Strike the Shepherd." (NKJV)

God gave to Zechariah a future vision in which God would bring complete victory over sin and all forms of evil. He will send His Shepherd to receive the ultimate death blow on behalf of all the sheep, His children. This prophecy is fulfilled in Christ. John 10:11 explains "I am the good shepherd. The good sheep-

herd lays down His life for the sheep.

While the people in Zechariah's day would not live to see the fulfillment of his prophecy, he pointed to the day that would impact all humanity, the sacrificial death of Jesus for the sin of all who will trust Him for forgiveness.

Zechariah also speaks to the events surrounding that sacrificial death saying "the sheep will be scattered", describing what would happen to all of Jesus' disciples on the night of His crucifixion. Jesus would encourage them later and comfort them before His ascension.

The Fire That Refines (Zechariah 13:8-9)

"I will bring the one-third

through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested." (Zechariah 13:9 NKJV)

Zechariah prophesies there is coming a purifying time for God's people, a separating time, a time of tribulation. He is revealing that there will be significantly fewer genuine believers than those who profess to be believers. "Two thirds shall

be cut off and die, but one third will be left" (v. 8)

He also says there will always be a faithful remnant.

Verse 9 is the key verse in this passage. "I will bring one third through the fire...will refine them as silver...and test them as gold." God says those who come through this testing will be "My people" and they will say "The Lord is my God."

This is a foretelling of the words of our Lord of the many who say they are followers of Christ but fall away in the times of trial and challenge. James tells us in his epistle, "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing." (James 1:2-4)

Every Christian will face challenges and trials as we are in the process of being sanctified by our Lord. It is the refining that makes us stronger and purer. Those are not the times for complaining, but thankfulness to our Lord for carrying us through those times. Paul told the Philippians "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

Young is retired Sunday School Director, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a member of Ridgecrest Church, Madison.

Exalted Like No Other • Ephesians 1:7-10, 18-23

Jesus is like no other. He was prophetically promised and miraculously born. His life displayed immeasurable power over all creation. His teachings were awe inspiring, bringing deep insight leading to personal conviction which called for immediate response.

Jesus died a sacrificial, substitutionary death once for all. Through His resurrection, He conquered death and dismissed the fear of death. At the end of His earthly ministry, He returned to His place at the right hand of His Father. He ascended to Heaven from Earth in full view of His followers. He sent angels to assure the eye witness on-lookers (and us!) of His return. Jesus is like no other. He stands alone, exalted like no other.

My sweet namesake, Jessica Rebecca Taylor, sang that famous Twila Paris song at the top of her little lungs: "He is exhausted, the King is exhausted on high, I will praise Him!" She taught me a huge lesson with her innocent word play. Daily, I must lift Jesus high through my private, personal devotion and publicly through my life actions. I must exalt Him until I am exhausted! He is never exhausted. His power and strength never fail.

The letter from Paul the Apostle to the church at Ephesus provides word pic-

tures of how we should exalt Jesus above all others. Paul loved the Ephesians. The book of Acts explains that Paul spent approximately three years of his ministry time with them. Reading the description of their tearful goodbye in Acts 20:17-28 always makes me weep.

In Ephesians chapter one, Paul describes recipients of this letter as "saints" meaning "ones who are set apart for the use of God." I love the way J. Vernon Magee explained the word "saints." There is no middle ground. Either we are "saints" or we are "ain'ts." True saints of God realize that we have many reasons to lift (exalt) Jesus high.

Because of Jesus, we have redemption. His blood bought us and set us free. We are redeemed!

Because of Jesus, we have access to the forgiveness of our sin. He lavished grace upon us, providing mercy instead of the eternal punishment we truly deserved. I

love that word "lavished." Paul is saying that through Jesus, God took His precious grace and smeared (lavished) it all over us, all around us and all through us toward others. Since we abound in grace, we can't help but lavish it on others as we move through life. We are forgiven!

Because of Jesus, we understand that the purpose of God was to help us to understand that He has a will and purpose for every life He creates. His plan is best. We should follow Jesus all the way to the completion of God's plan for our lives. We

are a part of the plan of God!

Because of Jesus, we are not powerless. Ephesians 1:18-23 provides us with even more reasons to exalt Jesus. We have hope in His calling. We are inheritors of the riches of His glory. We are protected by the same power that raised Jesus from the dead...the very power of God!

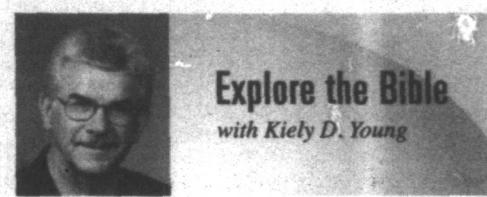
Jesus is seated at the right hand of God. Jesus is lifted far above any other

powers or rules of authority. His name is above every other name, then (in Paul's day) and now (in our day) and forever. All things stand in subjection to Him. We serve the Savior!

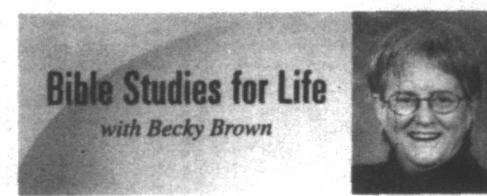
Verses 22-23 remind the Ephesians (and us) that Jesus is the head of the body of Christ which is the church. The eleven disciples who stood and watched Jesus as He ascended to Heaven would now appropriate that power as they prayed together in Jerusalem. Their belief in that resurrection and ascension power turned these disciples into fishers of men. Peter the denier became Peter the evangelist. Ten days after the ascension, God provided them with the presence of The Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised. The church was brought forth through a miraculous birth just like Jesus.

Sadly, the story of the Ephesians doesn't end with this letter from Paul. In Revelation 2:1-7, Jesus reveals to John that the Ephesians had left their first love. They ran well and still were commended in some areas, but they had to be told to repent, receive forgiveness and return to Jesus. Exhausted spiritually? Exalt the Savior!

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.



Explore the Bible with Kiely D. Young



Bible Studies for Life with Becky Brown

► **Coila Church, Coila:** Revival, Apr. 20 - 22, 7 p.m. nightly; Tim Mims, speaker; Terry Corley, pastor.

► **Harrisville Church, Harrisville:** Revival, Apr. 19 - 22; Sun., 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.;

Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Dennis Allen, speaker; Ronnie Cottingham, music.

► **Ramah Church, McCall**

Revivals & Homecomings

Creek: Homecoming, Apr. 19; service 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the ground; Pat Lofton, speaker.

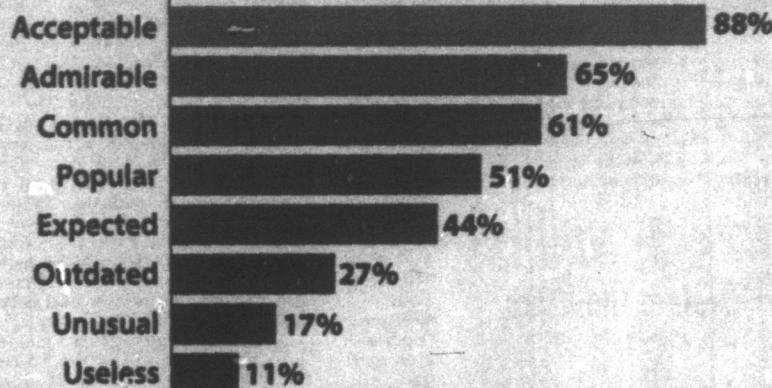
► **Immanuel Church, Greenwood:** Revival, Apr. 19 - 22; 6 p.m. nightly; Clarence Edwards, speaker.

► **Neshoba Church, Union:** Revival, Apr. 19 - 23; Sun., 11 a.m. followed by dinner and 7 p.m. nightly; kid's night Sunday; youth pizza party Wednesday; Hal Bates, speaker; John Yates, music and ventriloquism.

Two-thirds of Americans still believe in church's value

Among Americans:

"Church attendance is..."

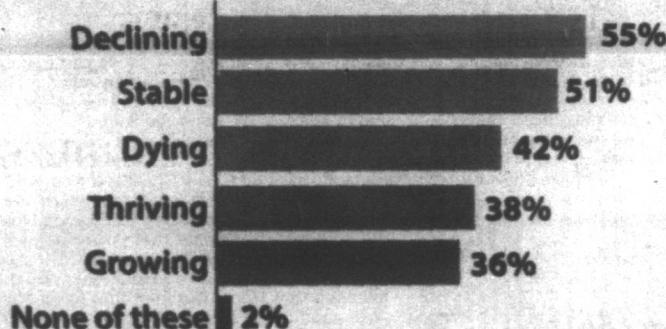


LifeWayResearch.com

LifeWay

Among Americans:

"In America, the church is..."



LifeWayResearch.com

LifeWay

NASHVILLE (BP) — The overwhelming majority of Americans say they find value in attending church, a new LifeWay Research study shows. Two-thirds of Americans think attendance is admirable. Only 11% consider church useless.

Even among nonreligious people, 80% believe church attendance is acceptable, and 43% label it admirable. Just 29% call it useless.

Despite their professed fondness for church, Americans are more likely to believe attendance is declining (55%) or the church is dying (42%) than growing (36%) or thriving (38%), according to the LifeWay survey of 1,000 Americans taken from Sept. 19-28 of last year.

"Americans have a much more optimistic view of the people and practice of attending church than they do of the health of the church," said Scott McConnell vice president of the Nashville-based LifeWay Research. "Church attendance is much like regular exercise and driving the speed limit. People do not live out everything they admire."

Confirming McConnell's assertion that Americans' churchgoing is at odds with their behavior even on Easter, traditionally the best-attended Sunday of the year, large segments of the population say they don't plan to attend, previous LifeWay research has found.

Their attitudes reflect the mixed trends of the past 50 years. While many mainline denominations have lost membership, some have grown. While more people are Christian today than in 1970, Christians make up a smaller share of the burgeoning population, according to a study from Gordon-Conwell Seminary.

Faced with those trends, many churches have shifted toward contemporary worship styles and new outreach methods, although 27% of Americans still think church attendance is outdated, LifeWay research found. That belief is even more pronounced among the nonreligious (42%), Catholics (31%), and people 25-34 years old (34%) who are among the Mil-

ennial generation in which fewer claim religious affiliation or profess belief in God, according to the Pew Research Center.

Young adults, like most Americans, don't see church attendance as an assumption in today's culture. While 54% of those over age 65 describe churchgoing as an expectation, that viewpoint is in the minority for every other age group — a sign that those who attend are making a personal choice rather than responding to societal pressure.

That's a positive finding, McConnell said. "I don't think evangelicals would want that to be the reason people go to church anyway."

Women have more positive attitudes than men about churchgoing, the LifeWay study found, with 69% of women and 63% of men viewing attendance as admirable. Only nine percent of women consider church useless, while 14% of men hold that opinion.

Larger shares of women also believe in the health and vitality of the church. Forty percent of women say the church is growing, and 41% describe it as thriving. Among men, only 32% think it is growing, and 34% label it thriving.

LifeWay Research also found significant differences along ethnic and racial lines. Although most Hispanics believe going to church is expected (55%), attendance is considered useless by one in five — almost double the rate of the population as a whole.

Whites are among the least likely to consider church useless (eight percent), but 60% believe the church is declining. In contrast, most African-Americans believe the church is growing (55%) and thriving (56%). More often than other groups, they describe church attendance as common (74%) and popular (61%).

The longevity of the Christian church proves it is not a fad, McConnell said. "Some Americans feel cultural expectations to attend church, but our recent research shows that those who actually do attend hold more closely to the teachings of Jesus Christ."

GuideStone again garners prestigious Lipper Fund Awards

DALLAS (BP) — Lipper Fund Awards has honored GuideStone Financial Resources in Dallas for the fourth consecutive year, recognizing the Southern Baptist entity's Extended-Duration Bond Fund in two categories of excellence.

During the March 31 awards ceremony, hosted by The Wall Street Journal and Investment News, GuideStone Funds was recognized for the second consecutive year as the Best Fund Over 3 Years and the Best Fund Over 5 Years in the Corporate

Debt A-Rated Funds category. This marks the fifth and sixth Lipper trophies for GuideStone Funds in the past four years.

In 2012, GuideStone Funds was honored as the Best Overall Small Fund Family in the U.S., ranking No. 1 out of 182 fund families with up to \$40 billion in assets. In 2013, the MyDestination 2025 Fund was ranked No. 1 out of 92 Mixed-Asset Target Date 2025 funds.

GuideStone Financial Resources President O.S. Hawkins said the Lipper recognition is

well-timed as GuideStone seeks to meet the increasing demand for investment products that align with Christian principles.

"We are honored, once again, with this national Lipper recognition, distinguishing GuideStone from all of its peers," Hawkins said.

"As we developed our investment products, we wanted to ensure they always reflected the values of the pastors and other church and ministry workers we served, while not sacrificing performance. As these industry

recognition have drawn new interest from other investors, we believe we have demonstrated success to that vision of performance and values, to God's glory and for the benefit of our participants."

John R. Jones, who serves as president of GuideStone Funds and chief operating officer of GuideStone Financial Resources, said "engineering a repeat performance is difficult." He noted, "To have the Extended-Duration Bond Fund recognized by Lipper two years in a row is a fitting

testament to our investment approach and the outstanding team that puts it into practice."

Ron Dugan, chief strategic investment officer at GuideStone Financial Resources, said the award "bears testimony to the diligent work of the GuideStone Funds team and the investment sub-advisors who work on behalf of our investors and participants."

"We are humbled by the award and see it as reflective of the work we undertake each and every day on behalf of our participants."